Marxology: 14 Marx Movies investigated.

Humor Risk (1921)

Humor Risk, also known as Humorisk, is a lost, unreleased 1921 silent comedy short film that was the first film to star the Marx Brothers. The print may have been accidentally thrown away when left in the screening box overnight. Another version of the story says that Groucho Marx, unhappy with the film's quality, intentionally burned the negative after a particularly bad premiere screening.

(Left:) Photograph associated is from The follow-up to Home Again was written by Herman Timberg. His sister Hattie Darling both managed and appeared in the show and boxing champion Benny Leonard who was a fan of both Hattie and the Marx Brothers contributed both financially and in person to the show. It was initially called On the Mezzanine Floor and made its début in February 1921. It was soon renamed On The Mezzanine and played mostly on the Poli circuit until transferring to Keith's for June-October (having taken a break in August). It received its final name On The Balcony after leaving Keith's, playing other theatres in the autumn before commencing a tour of the Orpheum circuit in December.

Humor Risk was directed by comedy film director Dick Smith (1886–1937), and was the first film written by Jo Swerling, who later co-wrote It's a Wonderful Life, Gone with the Wind and many other films. It was filmed in Fort Lee, New Jersey. The film's title was a spoof of the Fannie Hurst drama Humoresque, one of the biggest film hits of 1920.

The Marx Brothers would finally find success in motion pictures with The Cocoanuts (1929).

Information about the plot of the film is sparse. It is known that the brothers were working separately, rather than as a team, and did not incorporate their trademark comic personalities for which they later became known.

Harpo played the hero, a detective named Watson who "made his entrance in a high hat, sliding down a coal chute into the basement". Groucho played an "old movie" villain, who "sported a long moustache and was clad in black", while Chico was probably his "chuckling [Italian] henchman". Zeppo portrayed a playboy who was the owner of a nightclub in which most of the action took place, including "a cabaret, [which allowed] the inclusion of a dance number". The final shot showed Groucho "in ball and chain, trudging slowly off into the gloaming". Harpo, in a rare moment of romantic glory, gets the girl in the end.

Amid further investigation, plot lines such as Harpo slid down the coal chute to send Groucho to prison and it was a compilation of existing routines of the time that they did.

Four of the five Marx Brothers are known to have been in this short film. It was popular belief that Groucho was the Villain in the film, but details on the other roles were later coming. As written in his book, Kyle Crichton states that Harpo was the detective/sliding down the coal chute. Until Matthew Coniam's revelation, it was only known that Chico played an "Italian". Coniam uncovered later that Chico was the henchman and the brothers worked separately. It is here that Zeppo was given the role of bartender/playboy. It is also known now that Harpo wore a deerstalker cap

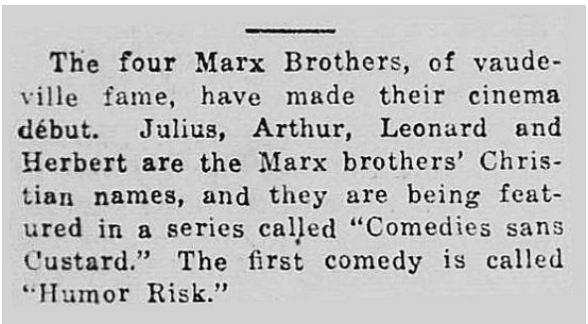
Jobyna Ralston is most often mentioned as the female lead., due in part to the production still's said leading lady (girl with hands draped over Dick Smith's shoulders, centered in derby hat) matches her most closely. However, some sources say that Mildred Davis—star and later wife of Harold Lloyd—was also in the film. However, this idea is negated by a researcher who suggested Groucho Marx (who cited her in his biography) was misremembering in his old age. It also doesn't check out that sources agree that she was too young at the time. The websites Marxology and SilentEra both state that the leading lady could have been one of two other actresses, Esther Ralston or Helen Kane. Esther was another close resemblance to the girl in the production still, but she never mentioned working with the Marxes. Helen Kane was noted as a "boop-a-doop" girl, but none of the Marxes mentioned her, a hard red flag.

Supporting players of the Marx Bros. Stage plays reportedly "joined in the mayhem". On one account, Dick Smith's mother visited the studio and consequently sat down at a table during shooting, only to return the next 3 consecutive days for continuity.

Only one photograph exists of the cast and crew of the film. It made it's internet debut as a screengrab from a Marx bros. documentary. It was passed down from Yvonne Smith, Dick's daughter, who in turn must have given it to Robert Weide, who gave it to Daniel Kinske for his book. (2018). It made its internet debut from there.

Face identification is possible thanks to the internet scan. Groucho is out of costume, bottom row to the left of Dick Smith, Harpo across from him, Chico in cap and glasses to right of leading lady (arms draped around Dick Smith). Zeppo is easily recognizable for his playboy costume and childlike face. Next to Zeppo is Mirantz, and supposedly Groucho's wife Ruth next to Chico.

It is unknown if this is an on-set or off-set photo. If onset, it could be some nice clues for the plot, with the lavish decorations typical of the era. As for costuming, Chico would be a key part in determining his forgotten role in the film. The gentleman to the top-right corner is a cut-out. Further speculation can contradict the publicly believed plot line. Dick Smith's derby hat and location make him seem as the main character, and the rest of the people are said to be either visiting guests or crew.



The four Marx Brothers, of vaudeville fame, have made their cinema début. Julius, Arthur, Leonard and Herbert are the Marx brothers' Christian names, and they are being featured in a series called "Comedies sans Custard." The first comedy is called "Humor Risk."

Information on the location of the film is contradictory. Author Allan Eyles states that the film was shot at Fort Lee, Jersey at 49 st, 10 avenue, New York. Groucho confirms this in his autobiography. “Shot on the west side of New York”. He also confirms it was 2 reels. Marx also says that they were working at the Palace Theater and had to run across town to do a scene. Author Charlotte Chandler sums it up; “Shot in New Jersey, lost in New York”. But new research in 2002 has claimed that there WAS no studio at 49,10, and it was unlikely that a 2-reel comedy was shot in two different locations. To accompany this, author Richard Koszarski stated the Old Ideal studio in Hudson Heights was quite cheap, a sure sign the privately-funded film was making use of it. But this studio contradicts a lot of things, namely because it routinely switched aliases, to such things as “The Briggs Studio”. This was reportedly located at 1996 Boulevard East (West NY). Add these all together and you can pinpoint a location for the film. Furthermore, Matthew Coniam says that the film was shot at “Victor Studios”. Though he confirms it was at Fort Lee, Universal Studios documents their purchase of the lot in 1917 (making it informal to name it that in the 1920s). The “New Victor Studio” was opened in 1915 at 643 West 43 street NY. Dubbed “the cheapest studio” that makes the film a prime contender for the poverty-like crew.

Jo Swerling played key roles, raising most of the money. Funding was also provided by the Marxes and cartoonist Alvah “Al” Posen (producer, in some sources), Nathan Sachs (who operated under numerous aliases, such as “Nat Saxe”) and Max Lippman. In one source, Oscar “Mike” Mirantz was in on the film in some way. A 1921 press release says that Yeatman Cheatham Alley was in with a lot of key spots. John William Collette was an early director, but quit ahead of his 1922 death, health issues. Dick Smith took his place, with a credit roll in Chicago complete. His wife Vallet was involved, too, and the couple had a round of directing with the 1930 Marx film Monkey Business. Smith also has an ample amount of supporting roles with luminaries leading up to this. Al Posen can be confirmed as a cartoonist thanks to preservation work on his stuff at th3 Syracuse University Library. Nat Sacks had previously partnered with Max Lippman on a law firm, having a fortune in the oil business (key in funding the film) and worked with the Marxes long after Humor Risk. When Sachs died, Harpo and Chico were pallbearers.

The film saw the light of day (some sources say as incomplete) at a children’s matinee in early December 1921. Due to a bad response, (Marx claimed that "there was more Marxian comedy going on in the audience than the film") Groucho burned the sole copy of the film, probably while lighting his cigar. The soonest a trade paper mentioned the film was through Wid’s Daily (later Film Daily) on April 8, 1921. (Ahead of release). The news line states that the Marxes had just signed onto a comedy film series with Caravel Comedies.

Over the film series was the title, “Comedies Without Custard” or “Comedies sans Custard”. (Caravel was located at 130 west 46 street). It was normal at this time to have 2-reeler comedies released in continual series, but it is obvious this one was a one-off. The next (and last surviving) headline was on April 16, 1921 on page 738 by Moving Picture World.

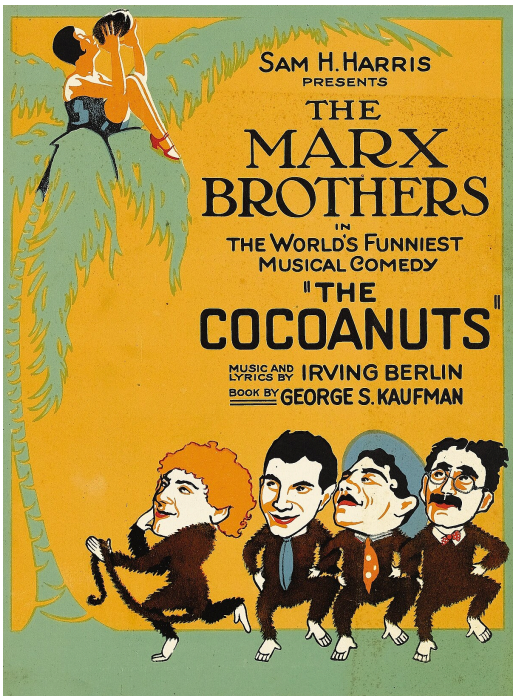
Kyle Crichton claims the film was destroyed but for one rogue print. This was used by friends of the brothers (actual o’ imagined) for “jovial blackmail”. Researcher Hector Arce in turn claims that the film print was burned (by Groucho) and the negative held in Posen’s closet. Upon this revelation, Posen organized a screening but the audience was given the letdown of no movie when the negative was in bad quality. This vanished forever when the Marxes slunk off and the canister was left at the

studio overnight. Marx Brothers manager Alexander Woollcott demanded a screening of the film at the end of 1929 when the Marxes went universal with I'll Say She Is!. Harpo also tried to watch it, offering a large cash reward for it's showing at the same time. Matthew Coniam ends it all when he says Reelcraft reportedly picked it up and filed it under another name, saying, "where could it be? That was the only film the brothers made that year."

Reelcraft sold the negatives at auction the next year and it may still survive.

According to a Film Daily headline on April 11, 1921, two sequel comedies would have followed Humor Risk; Hick, Hick, Hooray and Hot Dog. Nothing else is known beyond this.

The Cocoanuts (1929)



The Cocoanuts is a 1929 pre-Code musical comedy film starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo, Chico, and Zeppo). Produced for Paramount Pictures by Walter Wanger, who is not credited, the film also stars Mary Eaton, Oscar Shaw, Margaret Dumont and Kay Francis. The first sound film to credit more than one director (Robert Florey and Joseph Santley), it was adapted to the screen by Morrie Ryskind from the musical play by George S. Kaufman. Five of the film's tunes were composed by Irving Berlin, including "When My Dreams Come True", sung by Oscar Shaw and Mary Eaton.

On January 1, 2025, The Cocoanuts entered the public domain.

The success of I'll Say She Is! guaranteed the Marxes a second Broadway show. The Cocoanuts has music and lyrics by Irving Berlin and a book by George S. Kaufman, with additional text by Morrie Ryskind. The musical was given tryouts in Boston and Philadelphia before opening at the Lyric Theatre on 8 December 1925 and closing after 276 performances on 7 August 1926. The Marx Brothers then took the show on tour. After a brief Broadway revival at the Century Theatre in May 1927, the Marxes made a vaudeville tour with an adaption of the concluding party scene named Spanish Knights. It opened at the Metropolitan Theater in Los Angeles on 9 February 1928 and toured until April the same year. The Cocoanuts was performed by a British cast in London, England as early as in 1928, and the show was also revived in 1988 at the Arena Stage, Washington D.C.

The show was almost filmed by United Artists in 1928 (which would have meant a silent movie!) but instead, Paramount filmed it the year after as one of the first talkies. It reportedly ran as much as 140 minutes at a preview but was cut back to 96 minutes for the release on 3 May 1929.

The print available nowadays was obviously cut together from a number of battered negatives or old prints and runs about 92 minutes. Given the poor condition of the material that has survived, it's very doubtful that any of the missing footage has survived. Zeppo has less to do here than in later

films and his part may have been reduced in cutting. One moment may be traced thanks to the stage script. When the bellboys are protesting against being unpaid, Zeppo tells them that Groucho has yet to arise at four in the afternoon. His comforting postscript, that Groucho always gets up on Wednesday, precedes the manager's arrival. In his encyclopedia, Glenn Mitchell suggest that this scene was shot but deleted, as Groucho makes his entrance descending the stairs, still putting on his coat, allowing time to fend off his staff before meeting a train at 4.15.

The play included several songs that didn't make it to the movie, and there was also a revision of the show in the summer of 1926 which replaced a couple of the songs. Monkey Doodle-Doo was one of the songs that survived and also was retained for the film. In the 1990s, the tune was converted into a Chico-item in BBC:s revival of the radio show Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel, and Glenn Mitchell writes that George S. Kaufman's daughter Anne Kaufman Schneider were delighted when she heard that version; "That's usually a clumping chorus number and a bit of a dead spot. From now on I'm going to insist that Chico does Monkey Doodle-Doo in every revival of Cocoanuts!" Irving Berlin wrote a song named Monkey Doodle-Doo in 1913 but in an email I received in 2002, Kay Lhota points out that the 1913 song is not anything like the 1925 song, having a completely different set of lyrics and written in a different key.

In the preview-length print of the film, Groucho supposedly sang the number A Little Bungalow (which, according to Alexander Woollcott, was "clever, insidious, engaging") while courting Margaret Dumont. The song is set up through Groucho's dialogue ("Ah, if we could find a little bungalow, huh....oh, of course I know we could find one, but maybe the people wouldn't get out") but the film fails to deliver. In the play, A Little Bungalow was "the inevitable duet" (Woollcott), sang by characters Polly Potter and Robert Adams. Although replaced by another Irving Berlin-original (When My Dreams Come True), The Cocoanuts has gone to history as the only Irving Berlin-play that didn't produce a hit tune. A recording of A Little Bungalow by Helen Clark and Franklyn Baur was released in 1926.

Animal Crackers (1930)

Animal Crackers is a 1930 American pre-Code Marx Brothers comedy film directed by Victor Heerman. The film stars the Marx Brothers, (Groucho, Harpo, Chico, and Zeppo), with Lillian Roth and Margaret Dumont, based on the Marxes' Broadway musical of the same name. Mayhem and zaniness ensue during a weekend party in honor of famed African explorer Captain Jeffrey T. Spaulding. A critical and commercial success upon its initial release, Animal Crackers was shot at

Paramount's Astoria Studios in Astoria, Queens, the second film the Brothers would make in New York City.

On January 1, 2026, Animal Crackers entered the public domain.

Animal Crackers, the Marxes' third Broadway musical and second movie, has music and lyrics by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby and a book by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind. Alexander Woollcott mentioned the stage follow-up to The Cocoanuts in his column in December 1927 and described it as "a farce dealing with Long Island life and called While London Sleeps." It opened on Broadway on 23 October 1928 at the 44th Street Theatre, and ran for 191 performances and then toured. The film premiered on 23 August 1930.

A revamp of Napoleon's First Waterloo from I'll Say She Is! occupied the third scene of act two in the play but was almost entirely removed from the film save for the wrap-up of the plot. It was probably director Victor Heerman who suggested this for the sake of brevity. This also removed what was originally Harpo's musical spot which - as in the film version of The Cocoanuts - was inserted elsewhere. At the time of the filming of Animal Crackers it was said that the scene would be filmed on another occasion but it never was.

Often referred to as "The Du Barry-scene", The Court of Louis the 57th has been described as a "play in the play", where the guests of Mrs Rittenhouse portrayed figures from the court of Louis 57th in a costume party. Introduced by The Royal Filipino Band, the guest of honour, Captain Spaulding, was the King while Mrs Rittenhouse was his Queen. This didn't prevent him from arranging a liasion with Du Barry, alias Mrs Whitehead. Like Napoleon's Josephine, Du Barry had to wrestle on a sofa, being upended and thrown by all four Marx Brothers, fully dressed in French court regalia. The scene ended with Kalmar-Ruby's song Musketeers, which featured all the Four Marx Brothers.

Groucho (wants to make certain that Monsieur Du Barry is out of town)
You're sure this time? You know it doesn't look right for a king to keep jumping out of the window at three o'clock in the morning. The last window I jumped out of, I forgot to open. I'd show you the scars but I know you don't smoke!

Du Barry Sire, I fear for me to come here is indiscreet.

Groucho Nonsense, you'll be in the street sooner or later. You come from good stock, you'll probably be on the curb. Ah, Du Barry, you look wonderful in that French dressing...May I call you Du, Du?

Du Barry As you will, milord.

Groucho (calls for champagne) What do you think, do you think we'll ever get the saloon back?...And if we do, what's going to become of the bellboys in the Hotel Astor?

Hives, the butler Doucet, the French Premier.

Doucet Compliments, Your Majesty. Herzegovina has declared war upon us.

Groucho If you think I'm going to let my army fight with a Pullman car, you're crazy.

Although this song was omitted from the Animal Crackers-film, the "three cheers/chairs"-joke was used in the dialogue. It has also been speculated that the "one for all, two for five"-bit inspired a remark by Groucho in the film The Cocoanuts: "One for all and all for me, me for you and three for five and six for a quarter". The Cocoanuts was filmed while the Marxes performed Animal Crackers on stage and singing The Musketeers may have initiated a change of this passage, which in the script was: "Now and forever, one and indivisible, one for all and all for me and me for you, and tea for two." An instrumental midi-version of The Musketeers can be found at Frank M. Bland's site Why A Duck, in the Midi Files-section. Additionally, a version of the song with re-written lyrics was featured in Paramount's 1938-movie Cocoanut Grove. That movie is about swing band leader Fred MacMurray (as Johnny Prentice) trying to get his Chicago-based band across the US to make the legendary Cocoanut Grove in LA. The Musketeers is performed by the Yacht Club Boys, a "nut" singing group consisting of Charles Adler, George Kelly, James Kern and Billy Mann. This quartet hailed from the Catskills circuit and has been described as "the WASP" or "the Gentile" Ritz Brothers.

Most prints of Animal Crackers has some very noticeable edits in some scenes and the last scene of the play is almost entirely removed save for the wrap-up of the plot. Captain Spaulding, the African Explorer, was the most inspired of Grouchoesque creations. There had been a real Captain Spaulding, a vaudeville fire-eater ("The Man Who Was Hotter Than Vesuvius"), so the actual name might have come from Groucho. The song, written by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, is edited in most versions of Animal Crackers. The line "I think I'll try and make her" was cut from this song and the resulting edit causes Groucho to jump halfway across the screen. Exactly when this cut was made is uncertain. It may have been for the 1936 reissue, even if lots of people remember seeing an uncut copy as late as in the 1970s.

In the scene where Groucho and Margaret Dumont are left in the dark when the storms knock out the power, all that can be made out are two silhouettes. The silhouette that is supposed to be Groucho is obviously a stand-in which many people think is Zeppo. This is an oft-mentioned mystery among Marxians, and most of them have come to the conclusion that the scene must have been shot silently with a stand-in while the dialogue was recorded some other time. But why? Was it a last minute re-shooting? Was it the best way to get the correct lighting? Did they even have the technique by then to add the dialogue afterwards? A year earlier when they were shooting The Cocoanuts, they certainly had to do everything (picture, sound, orchestra etc) at the same time. A possibility is that the black-out scene was filmed with stand-ins while the head actors were standing behind the camera, simultaneously doing the dialogue and that all this was to get the best possible sound and pictures.

In this scene Zeppo had some lines about "scratching Elsie" (which was even used in some ads for the film), but they were cut nevertheless at some later stage. The first edit comes right after Zeppo asks how to spell semi-colon and Groucho replies "Make it a comma":

Groucho Dear Elsie, no never mind Elsie.

Zeppo Do you want me to scratch Elsie?

Groucho Well, if you enjoy that sort of thing, it's quite alright with me. However, I'm not interested in your private affairs, Jamison. Begin this way... let's start all over again...

It's easy to tell this has been cut since Groucho does a screen jump similar to the one in the Hooray for Captain Spaulding-number. The second edit is after the following dialogue;

Groucho I tell you what you do, Jamison, I tell you what, make it three windshield wipers and one Hungerdunger. They won't all be there when the letter arrives anyhow.

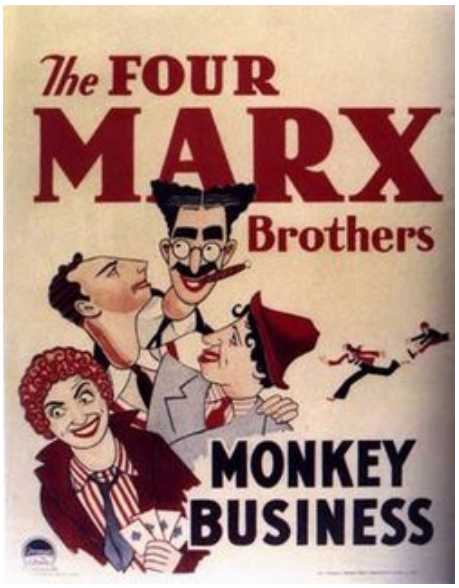
Zeppo Hungerdunger, Hungerdunger, Hungerdunger, and McCormick.

Groucho And McCormick.

Then the following is cut. The edit is harder to see since there is a change in camera shot.

Zeppo Dear Elsie, scratch.

Groucho That won't do, Jamison. That won't go thru the mail the way you've got the letter. The way you've got it, McCormick is scratching Elsie. You had better turn that around and have Elsie scratch McCormick. You'd better turn McCormick around too, Jamison and see what you can do for me.



Monkey Business (1931)

Monkey Business is a 1931 American pre-Code comedy film It is the third of the Marx Brothers' released movies (Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo), and the first with an original screenplay rather than an adaptation of one of their Broadway shows. The film also features Thelma Todd, Harry Woods and Ruth Hall and Rockliffe Fellowes. It is directed by Norman Z. McLeod with screenplay by S. J. Perelman and Will B. Johnstone.

On January 1, 2027, Monkey Business entered the public domain.

In 1931 Will B. Johnstone worked with Morrie Ryskind on an unused radio sketch for the Marxes when Groucho suggested a collaboration with S.J. Perelman for another proposed radio series. Perelman is quoted by Simon Louvish in Monkey Business - the Lives and Legends of the Marx Brothers; "We put in a couple of enjoyable sessions that got nowhere, except for a misty notion that the Marxes might be characterized as stowaways aboard an ocean liner." Groucho told them that "this isn't any fly-by-night radio serial - it's our next picture!" In addition to co-writing the script for Monkey Business, Will B. Johnstone also produced the cartoon for the pressbook. The film was released on 7 November 1931.

In many ways Monkey Business (which went under the working title Pineapples) presented an opportunity for the Marx Brothers to re-use old routines. The basic plot is a developed version of their vaudeville show Home Again and the imitation of Maurice Chevalier and his song You Brought A New Kind Of Love To Me from Paramount's The Big Pond is a revamped version of Theatrical Agency from On The Balcony and I'll Say She Is. Earlier in 1931, the scene itself was re-enacted by the Marxes in a film called The House That Shadows Built, put together by Paramount in recognition of their 20th anniversary.

Apart from reminiscences of the vaudevillian past, the basic storyline of Monkey Business also closely resembled The Seas Are Wet, a film idea from young Bert Granet about Marxian antics on a cruise ship. Granet also submitted another idea, College Daze, set on a campus. When Paramount first produced Monkey Business and then Horse Feathers without any acknowledgments or even the knowledge of Granet, he sued the film company. Paramount settled by hiring Granet as a screenwriter alongside Arthur Sheekman on a Bing Crosby picture. Later in life Granet and his wife Charlotte became two of Groucho's closest friends.

There are several differences between the final script (provided by Marie Sunny and dated 11 April 1931) and the finished film. One example is a sequence in the ship's nursery, which followed the Punch & Judy show. It got as far as production and stills show child actor Billy Barty with Harpo in a nurse's uniform.

Another is the scaled-down conclusion. Instead of Zeppo and Briggs fighting in the barn, the fisticuffs was to take place at a warehouse brewery with Briggs ending up being socked into a vat of beer. The Monkey Business topper scene had Harpo enjoying a swim in another vat of beer, his head coming up with a smile, spurting a little beer out of his mouth before diving again after honking his horn. The scripted finale was probably scrapped for cost and technical reasons - in addition to the bootlegger setting, the warehouse also had a steam hoist whose moving long arm and attached pincher figured prominently in the final comedy battle. Also lost was an artistically symmetrical fade out with Groucho, Harpo and Chico once again singing in barrels (as they do in the film's beginning), this time on the private yacht of Joe Helton (named Joe Farina in the script), while Zeppo and Mary Helton kissed nearby.

Horse Feathers (1932)

Horse Feathers is a 1932 American pre-Code comedy film starring the Marx Brothers. It stars the Four Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo, Chico, and Zeppo), Thelma Todd and David Landau. It was written by Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby, S. J. Perelman, and Will B. Johnstone. Kalmar and Ruby also wrote the original songs for the film. Several of the film's gags were taken from the Marx Brothers' stage comedy from the 1900s, Fun in Hi Skule. The term horse feathers is U.S. slang for "nonsense, rubbish, balderdash," attributed originally to Billy DeBeck.

As a work published in 1932 and renewed within 28 years, it entered the public domain on January 1, 2028.

Horse Feathers was released on 10 August 1932. From start to finish - via the working titles The Marx Brothers at Yale and The Marx Brothers at Vassar to the College Widow (described by William Craigie and James Hulbert in A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles as "a young woman who stays about a college year after year in order to associate with men students") and the concluding football game - it's a parody of the college movies that were popular at the time. The film also deals a bit with prohibition and bootleggers, and according to Groucho's grandson Andy Marx it was originally intended as a direct sequel to Monkey Business, but the idea of trivializing gangsters was dropped after the Lindbergh baby kidnapping in early 1932.

Sadly, no complete version of the film exists today. Several scenes were cut at some time after the premiere. Since most of these scenes involved Harpo, it has been suggested that they at some time were used in a compilation or documentary.

One of the scenes which have been tampered with is the one where the Marx Brothers and Jennings are trooping in and out of the apartment of Connie Bailey, the College Widow. This scene were based on Napoleon's First Waterloo from I'll Say She Is. After several incidents, Jennings orders Groucho and Chico to leave and then leave himself. The present version of Horse Feathers ends here but originally the sequence continued. Harpo has been hiding in the apartment and now leaps onto the couch beside Connie. "What do you want?" she asks sharply. Harpo points at her. "Are you a good boy?" Connie asks, and Harpo shakes his head. "You're bashful," she observes, presumably because he hasn't spoken. In answer, Harpo nods, looks bashful, and stands on his head in Connie's lap. She cries for him to get off her and he does, sitting alongside her on the sofa with one foot tucked under him. She tells him to take his foot off the sofa. Harpo shakes his head defiantly and makes his 'gookie' expression, so she tries to pull it off. She slaps him, a knock is heard, and he pulls her on to his lap. It is Groucho looking for his hat and rubbers.

Connie points in one direction while the hidden Harpo points in another. Connie seems to be slapping herself as Harpo's hands become playful. "Come now, where's my hat?" asks Groucho and Connie seems to point in three directions at once. Groucho finds the rubbers on Harpo's feet, sticking out from underneath Connie, and mistakes them for hers. Eyeing the expanse of the muscular leg with the trousers rolled up, Groucho comments, "We could use you in the football team." Groucho takes off the rubbers and tries to put them on his own feet, but Harpo's feet are so positioned that he puts them back where they came from, on Harpo. Groucho tells Connie he can't live without her, but Chico enters and interrupts. Finally Jennings comes in, telling Groucho he'll teach him to fool around with his girl. Connie jumps up, revealing Harpo, clutching a block of ice beneath her. Groucho crawls through a window with an open umbrella while Chico and Harpo dart out of the door. Arriving below the window, Chico encourages Groucho to jump. Harpo brings out his dog catcher's net to arrest his fall. At just this moment a dog runs by and Harpo starts after it with the net. Groucho leaps and falls to the ground with a sickening thud.

Another scene in the film depicts Harpo producing a hot cup of coffee out of his trouser pocket to give to a down-and-outer who had asked for money to buy a cup of coffee. In the longer version of the film this scene was preceeded by Harpo catching three dogs. First he lures one wire-terrier into his cart by simply letting it chase him there. Then he entices a police dog with a large portable lamppost which he sets up on the street. When the dog comes over to sniff at it, Harpo catches him in the net and places him in his wagon. Harpo repeats the process using a smaller lamppost and net in order to catch a puppy. The sign on Harpo's hat changes from Dog Catcher to Kidnapper in another now-missing scene where Harpo tries to net a girl.

The finale of the film is also changed, but this was done before the release. According to the pressbook for Horse Feathers, the Huxley students tear the town apart for fuel and celebrate with a huge bonfire the night after the football game. However, Harpo decides the bonfire isn't big enough for such a sensational victory and his pyromaniacal book-burning bent in the film is carried to new heights as he sets fire to the college! Suddenly word comes that Jennings is trapped on the third floor. Groucho, cigar and all, runs into the blazing building amid cheers. He returns unexpectedly and hands a bystander his cigar. "There's no smoking in the corridors", he explains, and rushes back into the building. He reappears - not with Jennings, but with a diploma for Zeppo (and thus finally gets his son out of college). "I'll bet that'll burn Jennings up", he remarks as he retrieves his cigar butt.

Broadway Musical School Days opened at the Circle Theatre 14 September 1908. With lyrics by Will Cobb and music by Gus Edwards, the song School Days was the centrepiece of the show and by 1910 vaudeville was full of similar schoolroom acts. It was natural for a fledgling comedy team like the Marx Brothers to follow a popular trend and led by Groucho they made their own adaption named Fun In Hi Skule. This was their first show in which comedy and not music was the key ingredient and very soon the Marx Brothers became popular vaudeville comedians. Like virtually everything else in vaudeville, Fun In Hi Skule was just as much "Fun with Ethnic Stereotypes". Groucho portrayed a "Dutch" or German (Deutsch)-accented comic, the stick-carrying Herr Teacher, in frock coat and a scratch wig simulating baldness. He sat at a desk towards the rear of the stage. Either side were doors marked "Boiz" and "Goils". The "Boiz" included Gummo as "Izzy", the Hebrew Boy, and Harpo as "Patsy Brannigan", an Irish-cum-rural type that was a regular character in vaudeville shows.

The type was based on a real-life Irish comic of that name active in the 1890s. Harpo describes his Patsy Brannigan costume in Harpo Speaks. In this case, Jenny the ex-girl singer mentioned must refer to the original Nightingale Mabel O'Donnell: "Minnie got out the wig she'd made up for Jenny, our ex-girl singer, cut off the piece that used to cover Jenny's cockeye, and dyed the wig red for me. She sewed bright patches onto my travelling pants, which were pretty well shot anyway, and I used a piece of rope for a suspender. The rest of the costume was my beloved turtle-neck sweater and a decrepit beaver hat that Minnie scrounged out of the boarding-house attic. For a final touch before going onstage, I reddened my ears, painted on some freckles and blacked out three of my front teeth."

Another character in the act was the stereotyped homosexual (the "sissy", "nance" or "fairy"), a bass-singer who spoke in falsetto. In The Marx Bros Scrapbook, Groucho writes: "And we had a fairy in the act. The guy wasn't actually a fairy but that's the part he played. He'd say, "Strawberry shortcake, huckleberry pie. Are we in it. Ra, ra, ra!" His name was Paul Yale". Several "Goils" were in the class, including the Marxes' Aunt Hannah (with as thick an accent as Groucho's) and a Lucille or Lillian Textrude. It is generally believed that the class room scene in Horse Feathers gives a good example of what Fun In Hi Skule was like, at least in general appearance. Additionally, Harpo and Groucho has given us several glimpses of the dialogue in the books Harpo Speaks and The Marx Bros Scrapbook respectivally. Harpo had yet to abandon dialogue and could thus explain why he was late for school: "My mother lost the lid off the stove, and I had to sit on it to keep the smoke in". A lot of fun was of course generated by the fact that a "Dutch" teacher was giving "a lesson in der Englisher langvidge", for example in "The Alphabet Bit", Harpo's "big scene" with Groucho. This piece of dialogue is included in Harpo's autobiography;

Groucho (whacking his slapstick, a pair of barrel staves) Patsy Brannigan, no more shenanigans! You will stand up and give the alphabet.

Harpo (scratching his head, thinking hard) The alphabet - the alphabet - Gimme a start, teacher.

Groucho (glares at Harpo, nose-to-nose) All right, dumkopf, I'll give you a start. "Ah - ah - ah - "

Harpo Ah!

Groucho Not "Ah" - "A!"

Harpo (heading for his seat) That's the alphabet - "A."

Groucho That's not the alphabet. Come back here.

Harpo There's more?

Groucho There's more. Please continue.

Harpo Gimme another start.

Groucho "Buh - buh - buh - "

Harpo "Buh?"

Groucho "Buh."

Harpo "Buh?"

Groucho "Buh."

Harpo "Buh?" (During this exchange they have sunk, nose-to-nose, nearly to the floor.)

Groucho Not "Buh," dumkopf!

Harpo Give me a hint.

Groucho What is it buzzes around the flowers? Bzzzzz? (Harpo starts waving and slapping at invisible bug) "Bee!"

Harpo "Bee!" That's the alphabet - "A, B."(heads for his seat)

Groucho Come back here, young man.That's not the alphabet.

Harpo There's more? Gimme a hint what comes after B.

Groucho I'll give you a hint. What's the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning? Sssssssss - (Harpo gives Groucho a shocked, pop-eyed look.) "C", dumkopf! The first thing you do in the morning when you wake up is "see".

Harpo That's not the first thing I do in the morning. Groucho ends the hopeless lesson with a crack of the slapstick.

An alternative ending of the scene may be suggested in Harpo Speaks!: "We got a bigger laugh later on when Teacher said, "Can't you get noddings through your thick head?" and Gummo stuck a stiletto through my hat and I answered Herr Teacher with an enthusiastic nod." Harpo obtained a further laugh when belying his idiocy with a long, erudite speech. A similar speech appeared years later in the stage version of Go West.

In The Marx Bros Scrapbook, Groucho writes: "Little by little we developed the school act. I'd say to Gummo, "What are the principal parts of a cat?" And he'd say, "Eyes, ears, nose, cheeks and tail." "That's not all," I'd say. "What does a cat have that I don't have?" And Gummo would answer, "Kittens!" Groucho also recalls another piece of dialogue with Harpo; "I'd ask Harpo, "What is the shape of the earth?" And he'd say he didn't know so I'd try to help him. I pointed to my cufflinks and said, "What shape are these?" He'd say "Square" And I'd say, "No, not these. The ones I wear on Sundays". He'd say, "Round." "Now, then," I'd say, "what is the shape of the earth?" And he'd answer, "Square on weekdays and round on weekends!"

A cartoon drawn for The Show World from a performance at the Lyda Theater, Chicago, in 1911 (reproduced in The Groucho Phile and cited in both Glenn Mitchell's Encyclopedia and Simon Louvish' Monkey Business) gives us some of the other gags. Groucho introduces the schoolclass as "a fine bunch of smart dunces". Gummo, the derbyhatted Jewish dandy, clutches his abdomen and claims: "Some-one stuck me in the back of the stomach!" Harpo is seated at a school desk with short breeches and a yokel's hat, saying nothing. Beside him Herr Teacher is saying: "Take that thing off your head! Don't think because I am a fool I am a Dutchman!" A broomstick and an apple lie before the teacher. In fact, various jokes with fruits seem to have been a major way of having Fun In Hi Skule. A running gag was that Groucho repeatedly would tell Harpo to take his hat off, only for Harpo to offer a token gesture of tipping it from behind, allowing the hat to fall back in place. Groucho says that he "hollered at Harpo about his hat. He usually had an orange under it and when he finally took it off the orange would roll onto the floor and all the students would dive for the orange. That was considered a pretty classy piece of comedy!"

Harpo adds: "We got a big laugh one night when the Teacher made me take my hat off and an orange fell out. I gave the orange to the Teacher, and he told me to put my hat back on because he'd like another one for later." And when Groucho is trying to educate Gummo in 'rithmetic, asking how he would divide ten apples among six people, Gummo of course answers that he would make

applesauce. Another apple was the one that Aunt Hannah offered Groucho. He placed the apple in a desk drawer - where it exploded! Having vented his wrath (maybe in the vein of "Don't think because I am a fool I am a Dutchman!"), Groucho tried to sit at his desk, only for Harpo to pull away the chair. A review in Variety on 24 February 1912 focuses on a very important thing in the career of Harpo Marx: "The Patsy boy is like a Clarence Wilbur in work, and a natural comedian. Also he is a harpist, and a good one. Introducing the harp into the center of the turn, he scored an unusually large success, deservedly so, besides giving a classy touch to the whole."

The second half of the show took the form of rehearsing for the school concert. Variety mentions the song Schnitzelbaum sung by the teacher, probably the same as Ist das Nicht Ein Schnitzelbank, Groucho's German item from the Nightingales-days and a song he was performing at the piano for his guests well into his eightieth year. Variety adds: "The girls do not figure largely, excepting to help out in talk and the choruses, although one leads Schoolmates for the finale". Soon the concert in the second act developed into a show of its own, Mr Green's Reception.

Duck Soup (1933)

Duck Soup is a 1933 American pre-Code musical comedy film written by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby (with additional dialogue by Arthur Sheekman and Nat Perrin) and directed by Leo McCarey. Released by Paramount Pictures on November 17, 1933, it stars the four Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo, Chico, and Zeppo in his final film appearance) and also features Margaret Dumont, Louis Calhern, Raquel Torres and Edgar Kennedy. Duck Soup was the last of the five Marx Brothers films released by Paramount Pictures. In the film, Groucho portrays Rufus T. Firefly, the newly installed president of the fictional country of Freedonia. Zeppo is his secretary, while Chico and Harpo are spies for the neighboring country of Sylvania. Relations between Firefly and the Sylvanian ambassador (Calhern) deteriorate during the film, eventually leading the two countries to war.

In 1990, the United States Library of Congress deemed Duck Soup "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" and selected it for preservation in the National Film Registry. It subsequently entered the public domain on January 1, 2029.

Horse Feathers was Paramount's biggest hit of 1932 and after a wildly successful preview, the studio announced on 2 August that they should rush out another film with the Marx Brothers while they were hot. Already at this early stage, the story (provisionally entitled Oo La La) was set in a mythical kingdom. On 11 August 11, The Los Angeles Times reported that production should commence in five weeks with Ernst Lubitsch directing. But this was a turbulent period in the Marx Brothers career. A reorganization of Paramount Pictures brought fears that money due the Marxes would never be paid and the contractual dispute culminated in the

team threatening to go it alone as Marx Bros., Inc. Their first independant film was to be Of Thee I Sing, the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize, with Norman McLeod leaving Paramount to direct. During the winter of 1932-33, Groucho and Chico was also working with Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel, a radio series written by Nat Perrin and Arthur Sheekman and there was at one time talk of casting them in their radio characters for the new film. It was 4 October before Arthur Sheekman, Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby began writing the screenplay for the next Paramount film, which was now called Firecrackers. Herman Mankiewicz was to supervise production, beginning in January. By December 1932 Firecrackers had become Cracked Ice. It has been claimed that Grover Jones also contributed to the first draft by Kalmar and Ruby.

In February 2000, I was contacted by fellow Marxonian Kevin Kusinitz. He wrote about an orginal typewritten copy of the first treatment for Duck Soup, which he had bought at auction several years ago for $ 25. The scanned pages of this treatment is presented on this site (see below). This interesting item features the original title, Firecrackers, crossed out and replaced by Cracked Ice, which, in turn, is crossed out and replaced by Duck Soup. It seems to me that this is the obscure first draft of Cracked Ice or - as it says - Firecrackers. This is suggested not only by the changes of the title but also by the dates in the treatment, the number of pages (27 as opposed to 98 in the second draft) and also a comparision with excerpts from this draft, as presented in Simon Louvish's book Monkey Business. In both versions, Groucho is named Rufus T. Firestone, but in the second draft the names Trentino and Sylvania are established, as opposed to Frankenstein and Amnesia in this supposed first version. Zeppo is Groucho's son, but that was changed very late in production, as is evident from the first radio trailer.

On 18 January 1933 Harry Ruby, Bert Kalmar and Grover Jones submitted to Paramount their Second Temporary Script for Cracked Ice (98 pages, provided by Marie Sunny), and Paramount announced that filming would begin on 15 February. According to Wesolowski, the script reveals that the basic story line of what would become Duck Soup had been set. In February Paramount announced that the title had been changed to Grasshoppers ("because animal stories are so popular"), and that filming was set back to 20 February. On 11 May 1933, the Marx Brothers' beloved father Sam "Frenchie" Marx died in Los Angeles of a heart attack, and shortly afterwards, the dispute with Paramount was settled. The New York Post reported on 17 May that the Marxes would make a new comedy for Paramount, called Duck Soup. Leo McCarey would direct the film. Three days later The New York Sun reported that Duck Soup would start filming in June. Duck Soup's script was completed on 11 July. It was clearly a continuation of Kalmar-Ruby's Firecrackers/Cracked Ice-drafts but contained more elements. Michael Barson shows that fifteen routines from the Flywheel-radio show were transplanted into the script, with Perrin and Sheekman receiving an "additional dialogue"-credit. Lost along the way was a scripted romance between Zeppo and Raquel Torres and with it a Kalmar-Ruby love song called Keep On Doing What You're Doing, used instead for the following year's Wheeler & Woolsey comedy Hips, Hips Hooray (where Wheeler & Woolsey performs it with Dorothy Lee and Thelma Todd). It's a lovely tune and I can just imagine Zeppo and Groucho singing it with Raquel and - why not? - Thelma.

Director Leo McCarey had worked with Laurel & Hardy at Hal Roach's studio, and he contributed more ingredients of Duck Soup, including the title (which had been used for a Laurel & Hardy two-reeler released in 1927) and the very Laurel & Hardy-like sequence in which Harpo and Chico stage a break-in at Mrs Teadale's house. Another McCarey contribution, the mirror routine, (according to Variety invented by the old stage act the Schwartz Brothers) had been used by Charlie Chaplin in 1916's The Floorwalker and by Max Linder in Seven Year's Bad Luck (1921). Like most

other film studios, Paramount launched a series of radio trailers in the early 1930s. They were called The Paramount Movie Parade and the first two promos in this series from 1933 featured highlights from Duck Soup. As the film was still in production at the time, both promos offers a lot of out-takes and an insight into the making of Duck Soup. The radio trailers are mostly made up of alternate takes with additional lines of dialog that did not appear in the movie. The movie trailer also contains some alternate takes or angles, for example when Harpo marches in with the guards and throws his stick in the air which causes the chandelier to fall down on him.

A Night At The Opera (1935)

A Night At The Opera is a 1935 American comedy film starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo and Chico), and featuring Kitty Carlisle, Allan Jones, Margaret Dumont, Sig Ruman, and Walter Woolf King. It was the first of five films the Marx Brothers made under contract for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer after their departure from Paramount Pictures, and the first after Zeppo left the act. The film was written by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind from a story by James Kevin McGuinness, with additional uncredited dialogue by Al Boasberg. The film was directed by Sam Wood.

A Night at the Opera was the first Marx Brothers film for MGM, and the first made without Zeppo. Matthew Coniam notes in his book The Annotated Marx Brothers that The Motion Picture Herald 1 June 1935 annonunced the upcoming film as Raspberries. A Night at the Opera was released 15 November 1935.

The original shooting script was issued in paperback in 1972. It indicates that the opening sequence was to have depicted the merry residents of Milan singing a song (both Cosi-Cosa and the chorus of Pagliacci have been suggested), with each singer passing the song along to someone else who continues to sing it. The song eventually winds up with the waiter in the restaurant, who apparently stopped singing just before he approched Mrs. Claypool. Pagliacci re-appears later in the film when Groucho sings a couple of lines of the song Vesti la giubba, albeit with his own lyrics: "Ridi Pagliacci...I love you very muchee...!"

The scene where Groucho pulls up at the Opera House is badly cut with the picture and sound jumping and being out of sync. There is a terrible sound jump and the exterior shot of the Opera House is only on screen for a split second. It may just have been filler "atmosphere" shots of the opera house at night with people arriving and taking their seats. Glenn Mitchell suggests the footage to have been cut just before the initial release with even more footage snipped from the 1949 reissue. Another theory is that all German and Italian references were removed from the film during WWII and never replaced. The trailer for the film features footage of Groucho, Harpo and Chico walking away from the unconsious Lasparri and also footage of

the Marx Brothers and Allan Jones in the ticker tape parade. None of these appears in the finished film.

The complete cast list from the film as presented in MGM: The Golden Years, names several characters who actually don't appear in the film, such as Count DiLuna and Ferrando. In an email sent to me on 5 November 2001, Dale Blasingame points out that these are actually from Verdi's Il Trovetore, the opera around which the film is written. "It is possible that these parts were to have been featured and were simply edited for time or some other reason" Dale writes.

In an email I received on 2 February 2002, Kay Lhota cites the 1972-book with the script of A Night at the Opera. According to the script, a fire breaks out while all of the crazy goings on at the theater goes on and the Marxes manage to keep the audience from panicking while Ricardo and Rosa hold the audience with their beautiful voices. The last scene of the film (shot at a set that looks like the one used in the Russian Aviators speech scene) was to be the Mayor congratulating the heroes for saving the theater audience (photo provided by Kay Lhota).

In 2007 and 2008, Hungarian marxologist Racz Tamas made several important discoveries concerning A Night at the Opera. The first was a Hungarian movie poster depicting an otherwise unknown scene which probably appeared early in the film as it shows Lasparri in clown costume alongside Harpo and Rosa. As can be seen in the present version of the film, Lasparri is appearing with Rosa in a performance of Pagliacci ("Clowns"). That story ends with the jealous Canio (alias Pagliaccio) killing his wife Nedda (alias Colombina) and the villager Silvio. In the play, there's also a fool named Tonio (alias Taddeo). To judge from this, the photo shows Lasparri as Canio/Pagliacci right after he has killed Nedda/Colombina (played by Rosa) and Silvio. To the right stands the horrified witness Tonio/Taddeo, played by Harpo.

Next came another movie poster showing yet another scene which isn't in the movie. It's a photo of Harpo, Chico and Allan Jones sitting in front of a window looking in a room on the boat's deck, and in that room sits Maggie Dumont. There is a known alternative shot of this showing them from the room looking in, with Harpo making a cockeyed grimace.

After this, Racz Tamas visited the Hungarian National Film Archive to see if they actually had an uncut print of A Night At the Opera, and he found something very interesting indeed! This is his own story:

"I watched the first reel of the print of the Hungarian National Film Archive, to find two additional shots, two additional sentences, and different angles of already known shots. The first thing that absolutely shocked me was that when Harpo and Chico are backstage, the music of the opera was loud, and instead of the shot of Lasparri singing in his white clothes, they showed a man singing who wasn't him, and he wore different clothes. Then Chico said to Allan Jones "Someday you're gonna be where Lasparri is", but the man who was singing wasn't Lasparri at all. The other shock was when Kitty Carlisle was singing. It was her, but she sang a different part of the opera, and she was only shown above the waist, rather than what is in the DVD version, where she is standing, and we can see a man behind her. In the scene, when Groucho and Chico first meet, when they are standing on Lasparri, I found two additional sentences.

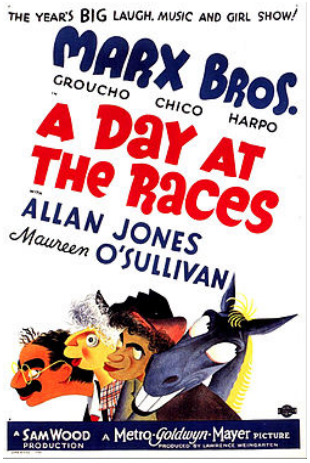
Chico: "I'm a stranger here myself" (This line is in the DVD edition, but right after it you can see a jump cut)
Groucho: "Aren't you an italian?"

Chico: "No, only my mama and papa is italian."
Groucho: "What's his name?" (referring to the tenor he wants to sign)
Chico : "It's an italian name." (This was cut) "I can't pronunce it."

As you can see references to Italy were indeed cut, but it still does not contain the 4 minute street singing intro that people were talking about. Unfortunately I could only watch the first reel, which ends in the middle of the contract scene. It was extremely expensive to do. It cost me two times more than to buy the DVD. I asked them about transferring this version to DVD just to preserve the film, and they told me that it would cost a lot of money, and that I have to speak to the owner of the rights of this film."

So far Racz Tamas. The existence of a more complete version of A Night at the Opera is of course big news in the Marxonian world and I would like to see an international effort to preserve this version. Also, I think the copyright-holder should be very interested in the possibility to restore this Marx Brothers classic.

A Day At The Races (1937)



A Day At The Races is a 1937 American comedy film, and the seventh film starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo and Chico), with Allan Jones, Maureen O'Sullivan and Margaret Dumont. Like their 1935 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer feature A Night at the Opera, this film was a major hit.

A Day at the Races was preceded by numerous script versions. In his book Monkey Business, Simon Louvish mentions six screenplays, fourteen outlines and treatments, and five vaudeville-act scripts (for a try-out tour of 141 performances during the summer of 1936). An early working title was Peace and Quiet, and at a time Groucho was cast as Cyrus P. Turntable of the Quackenbush Medical Building. The idea of the Marxes running a hospital was the central theme, and according to Louvish it was Will B. Johnstone who in a later draft introduced the idea of a race track;

A character named Muggs is carrying $500 in bail money with which to spring a Dr. Leach from jail. The Marxes want Leach to stay where he is, so they decide to convince Muggs to bet his wad on a sure loser. Chico (in a bit more true-to-life than usual) scours the track for tips and finds ten of them -- one for each horse. "Should make racing history," he remarks; "Ten horses in a dead heat." So they substitute a plowhorse for number 10 and put Harpo aboard, and bet Muggs' money on that. Chico tells Harpo: "At the first quarter, you start holding him back. At the second quarter you start holding him back still more. The third quarter, I think maybe you better tie him to a post." Unfortunately, as it turns out, the race has been rigged in favor of number 10, leaving the other nine jockeys trying to figure out how to stay behind a horse that isn't going anywhere.

Irving Thalberg, upon reviewing the draft, liked the bit about the racetrack and suggested expanding it, so gradually with further drafts it took over more of the plot. Louvish has discovered some similarities between the final plot of A Day At

The Races and The County Fair, a stage hit from the 1890s which featured Uncle Al Shean. The show ran for over three years and starred its co-writer Neil Burgess in cross-dressing mode as Abby Prue. Prue is unable to pay off the mortgage of the farm but has a horse of unexpected speed in the barn, a horse that'll win the race and enough money to bring the play to a happy end. The big attraction of The County Fair was the final racetrack scene, set on a treadmill, with real horses, a real waterfall and a real, 18 feet high tree on the stage. Uncle Al sang a solo in the corn husking scene, rode a horse in the third act and handled props between times.

Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby wrote a song for "Quackenbush" in the Vaudeville tour. After dropping the "Q" when real-life Quackenbushes was discovered in the medical world, the song was intended to a introduce Groucho in the film as Dr Hackenbush. However, this scene was apparently never filmed. Groucho's son Arthur claimed Groucho was only too happy to delete it, since filming such a production number was always rather taxing and would presumably have been especially so with Sam Wood in the director's chair. However, Groucho made a version on record in 1951. Glenn Mitchell also mentions a 16 mm Kodachrome reel in private hands, which - although it's silent - shows Groucho singing the song in the Hollywood Victory Caravan during WW2. Another song that was cut was Allan Jones' love song from the very beginning of the film, A Message From the Man in the Moon by Bronislau Kaper and Gus Kahn, which was relegated to incidental music during the water carnival and a very short reprise by Groucho in the finale.

Even after the filming was finished, scenes were cut in order to bring the film down to a manageable duration. A published script, which like A Night at the Opera's equivalent offers pre- and post-release versions, records some of these lost moments.

Prior to Harpo's examination by Groucho, there's a cut scene with him at the sanitarium. Among the other patients is a little girl who throws a tantrum when presented with food. Harpo tries to coax her into eating by taking a spoonful of icecream, but the kid squawks. The girl hits Harpo with a balloon attached to a stick, but the balloon becomes detached and deflates. When the child starts bawling, Harpo attempts to pacify her by re-inflating the balloon, but inhales too deeply and swallows it. On the arrival of a nurse, Harpo hides beneath a bed, but when it is wheeled away, Harpo has vanished. Chico, outside in the corridor, looks for Harpo and is alerted by the sound of a taxi horn as the bed is wheeled past. Harpo is clinging to the underside of the bedsprings, hitching a free ride as the puzzled staff question the source of the noise. From here Chico wanders into a steam room, emerging to confront Groucho with news of a "patient" as in the released version.

Other stills preserve deleted material from the Water Carnival, as when Chico and Harpo intrude themselves upon Groucho and party. They examine the contents of a chafing dish and replace it with a fish from Harpo's pocket.

"Hugo!" cries Margaret Dumont, "Look what they're doing!", but Groucho tries to ignore them in favour of a spoon-jumping trick he is attempting. Harpo de-scales the fish with Dumont's lorgnette, while Chico builds the fire under the dish, dumping in various items, all the while dropping loud hints about horse doctors. Harpo's mayhem includes filling a pipe with food instead of tobacco, and swallowing a demitasse complete with cup. "I think they're cooking my goose", Groucho observes while his guests depart before the intruders join him at the table. The approaching Sheriff is their cue to leave. "I don't think we wait for dessert!" Chico says and Harpo catches the spoon that Groucho has been trying to launch into a glass, sending it down the back of Dumont's dress.

Another loose end is Groucho's reference to Chico and Harpo staying "down in that room with those pigeons", when none have ever been seen in the film or been mentioned in the pre-release script.

The scene when Groucho has invited Flo Marlowe (Esther Muir) to his quarters and Chico and Harpo do their best to prevent mrs Upjohn (Margaret Dumont) from discover this, have also been edited. When Chico first appears as the house detective, the dialogue suggests this to be a return visit. When Groucho calls for "the bellhop to hop up with some hop Scotch" in the finished film, nothing follows because of to the deletion of Harpo and Chico masquerading as bellboys. In the script, Harpo opens the door with an oversized master key and enters with Chico, who bears a tray with Scotch, glasses and soda syphon. As Groucho pours a drink, Harpo sprays soda not just towards the glass but all over the tray, from which it rebounds over Chico, Groucho and Flo. "Hey", says Groucho, "just fill the glass, not the room!" Groucho and Chico take refuge behind the sofa as Harpo attempts to stem the now uncontrollable syphon. They make for the table as Chico insists the woman is "no good". Groucho, caught sideways when the soda is placed on the table, claims "If this keeps up she'll float out". "This is no place for a man who hasn't been in the Navy" Groucho continues and pretends to have been persuaded to leave. He cons the others into doing the same but not before Harpo has thrown the syphon back in Flo's direction.

Additionally, the trailer for this film also presents an alternate take of Groucho's and Flo's embrace in the scene.

Room Service (1938)

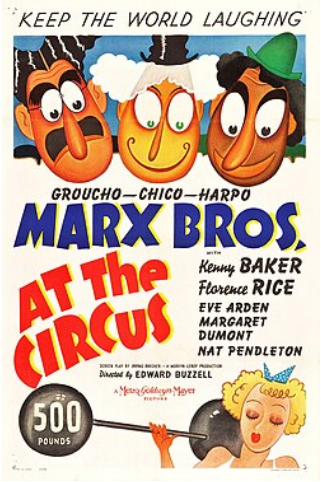
Room Service is a 1938 American comedy film directed by William A. Seiter, based on the 1937 play of the same name by Allen Boretz and John Murray. The film stars the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo and Chico) and also features Lucille Ball, Ann Miller and Frank Albertson. It was produced and distributed by RKO Pictures; RKO paid $255,000 for filming rights, which was then a record for a sound picture.

Released by RKO on 30 September 1938, Room Service was based on a very successful Broadway play by John Murray and Allan Boretz. The studio paid $255 000 for the film rights and a further $250 000 for the Marx Brothers. Zeppo arranged the deal, the only he made for his brothers. Groucho's only comment on the subject was that his brother Zeppo should have arranged a larger salary. The play was adapted and Marxified by Morrie Ryskind.

Fly-by-night theatrical producer Gordon Miller struggles to keep his production and cast together, despite severe deficiencies in the money department. Hotel-chain supervisor Wagner threatens to

throw Miller and his actors off the premises, an eventuality Miller hopes to forestall until he can obtain $50,000 from a wealthy backer. Meanwhile, the author of Miller's play, shows up to see how things are going.

Over the years people have discussed possible alternate casting options that might have made the film more characteristic, like bringing in Zeppo as the playwright, Sig Ruman as Wagner, Margaret Dumont as the potential backer, etc. Another suggestion has been to put Zeppo or a Zeppo substitute as Gordon Miller, the producer; this also fits well for making Chico and Harpo his primary allies. Groucho then would be plugged into the role of the hotel manager, Miller's brother-in-law, who has been reluctantly providing cover for the company. This would have done a better job of sustaining the Marxes' characterizations even if it meant more changes in the original play. Room Service was effectively musicalized in 1944 as Step Lively starring Frank Sinatra. Putting the Marxes with ol' Blue-eyes in a combined movie would also have been interesting.



At The Circus (1939)

At The Circus is a 1939 comedy film starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo and Chico) released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in which they help save a circus from bankruptcy. The film contains Groucho Marx's classic rendition of "Lydia the Tattooed Lady". The supporting cast includes Florence Rice, Kenny Baker, Margaret Dumont, and Eve Arden. The songs, including "Lydia the Tattooed Lady", "Two Blind Loves", and "Step Up and Take a Bow", were written by the team of Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg, who'd recently furnished the songs for another MGM film that same year, The Wizard of Oz.

At the Circus was released on 20 October 1939. The working title was A Day at the Circus and the earliest outline was written by Ben Hecht. In this version, the rich showman Joe Marlowe has died and left his circus to his son, the circus Strong Man, and to "his associates as clowns and ringmasters" - the Three Marx Brothers. However, the Strong Man and his sweetie Pauline plot to take it all. There are also eels in the bathtub, elephants in the living room, an escaped gorilla and society dame Mrs Chippendale who gets the circus show against her will for assembled upper-crust guests.

Arthur Sheekman and Irving Breecher wrote a similar script, but the fact that this script wasn't taken on a pre-filming stage tour like most other MGM films makes a difference as the jokes are of a much less consistent quality. However, a film which has Groucho Marx singing Lydia the Tattooed Lady just can't be bad. The scene described below is a sequence that was cut from the film before release. It was intended to introduce Groucho as lawyer J. Cheever Loophole and appears as presented in "The Freedonia Gazette" no 13, 1984.

A close shot of the judge on his bench. He is rapping with his gavel.

Judge We have had too much delay in this trial! Now then, where is the plaintiff's attorney?
A wider angle takes in the judge, the court clerk and the plaintiff. The plaintiff is a very statuesque blond wearing a veil, and revealing an attractive pair of legs. She is seated in the witness chair. The court clerk is rising.

Court clerk Is the attorney for the plaintiff in the court? (louder) Attorney J.Cheever Loophole! Attorney Loophole! Mr. Loophole!
Pan to jury box. Chin in hands sits lawyer Groucho. He is cat-napping. The noise awakens him. He leaps to his feet and whirls on the jury with a dramatic plea.

Groucho Gentleman of the jury. I implore you to face the facts. This is a simple case of...
Over scene we hear judge rapping with gavel. Groucho stops, looks toward judge. Angle on front of courtroom. Defendant's attorney jumps up.

Defendant's attorney This is highly irregular! Why is the attorney for the plaintiff sitting with the jury?

Groucho I'd rather have the state owe me three bucks a day than the plaintiff.
Groucho steps out of jury box and stalks over to a frightened little man who sits at defendant's table. Groucho points an accusing forefinger at him.
I intend to prove that this monster...with his silken words and cotton suit, did, wilfully and with malice aforethought, promise that he would marry...
His voice breaks.
...this little child.
He points to the plaintiff
This delicate flower! Gentlemen, this girl believed that man...she trusted him.
To camera
Ain't that a woman for you!
He runs to attack the jury once more.
Gentlemen, to me a woman has always been something to revere...my mother was a woman...grand-daughter to Paul Revere. But that's a horse of another story!
Suddenly the defendant's attorney leaps to his feet, waiving a few shabby pieces of paper and shouting.

Defendant's attorney Your Honor, the plaintiff's counsel has introduced no evidence other than this affidavit with half the pages missing!

Groucho Well, affa-davit is better than none.

Defendant's attorney He has not succedeed in proving even one of his allegations. And I move that you dismiss the case.

Groucho (confidentially to jury) How do you like that guy? The first case I've had in nine years, and he wants to dismiss it.

Judge (pounding gavel) Silence!

Groucho (to other attorney) Yeah, pipe down!

Defendant's attorney There is not one scrap of evidence to show that my client here was ever even seen with this woman...and yet she sues him for breach of promise!

Judge (to Groucho) Has the plaintiff any further evidence?

Groucho (sardonically) Any further evidence? Only my trump card, that's all. If it please the court, I should like to call Detective Nicholas Bludge to the stand.
Shot toward court audience. In the second or third row rises a burly man, while off screen we hear the clerk's voice.

Court clerk Detective Nicholas Bludge!
Bludge is walking toward stand.

Bludge Here.
Angle on front of courtroom. Groucho struts around triumphantly, then turns to opposing counsel.

Groucho You want evidence, eh?
He glares at worried defendant.
Bounder!
The Detective takes the stand, and Groucho goes into action.
Mr. Bludge...on the night of November 27th, did you - or did you not - see this little lady...with a certain despicable playboy?
He glowers at the little defendant.

Bludge Well...

Groucho No evasions, please. Remember, the future happiness of several human lives depends on your testimony here...now tell the court...tell the jury...tell the whole world...WHO is that man?

Bludge (indicating Groucho) You.
Close shot on Groucho, taking this big.

Groucho (incredulous) Me?
Medium shot on principals. Over scene comes the hubbub of the courtroom. Groucho scurries over to the woman in the case, quickly lifts her veil. He's amazed to recognize her.
Valerie!
The judge raps his gavel for silence.
Your honor, I move for an adjournment!

Reaching the aisle, he walks rapidly toward the door, the camera trucking with him.
And I'm gonna keep moving!

Corridor outside courtroom. As Groucho darts out, slamming the door behind him, he is confronted by a quartette of Postal Telegraph boys. Groucho is terrified, as he mistakes them.

Groucho The National Guard!

The boys Mr. Loophole?

Groucho Yes, but I've got an alibi. I didn't do it.

The boys Postal Telegraph Message No. eleven-thirty six.
They sing
Happy birthday to you
Happy birthday to you
Come quickly to Luxton
Or the circus is through.
They bow
Signed...Antonio!
They hand him a wire. As the truth dawns on Groucho, he brightens.

Groucho Don't wait for an answer. I'll sing it to him myself!
The scene fades out as Groucho heads for the door

Go West (1940)

Go West is a 1940 American comedy western film from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer starring the Marx Bros. In their tenth film, (Groucho, Harpo, and Chico) head to the American West and attempt to unite a couple by ensuring that a stolen property deed is retrieved. The film was directed by Edward Buzzell and written by Irving Brecher.

Go West was originally developed by Irving Thalberg in parallel with A Day At The Races. The first outline was logged as early as 15 April 1936 by Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby and William Slavens McNutt. This version had a contemporary setting where the Marx Brothers were entangled with a rodeo, while the basic plot dealt with a map leading to a gold mine. A composite script by Kalmar and Ruby was ready on 19 August 1936, but the project was cancelled when Thalberg died. It is possible that the song Go West, Young Man, written by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby and performed by Groucho in Copacabana (his 1947 feature with Carmen Miranda) is a left-over from the original Go West.

When MGM returned to the idea after At The Circus, it was Irving Brecher who wrote the script. In March 1940 the show went on the road, playing 103 performances from Chicago to Detroit. Some of the performances were filmed on 16 mm films but none of this footage is known to exist today. A memorable moment from the stage version appeared at the end when Harpo held a long but nonsensical speech, similar to the one he held in Fun In Hi Skule. The speech ended:

"May I not have the rather unusual privilege of tending to you, my audience, the warm congratulations which are rightfully yours for the keenness and perspicacity which you have shown in recognizing true genius, accomplished artistry, and monumentomonumania. Thank you."

However, in keeping with his silent image, the scene was never shot.

The trailer for the film presents an alternate angle where Groucho enters saloon and also features a short close-up that is not in the film, where Groucho says "It's just like a movie".

The song As If I Didn't Know, written by Bronislau Kaper & Gus Kahn and sung by the film's romantic lead John Carroll, was recorded for the radio promo and included in the credits but cut before the film was released on 6 December 1940. Two other songs written by Kaper & Kahn for the film, There's a New Moon Over the Old Corral and I Can't Get Along with Horses, weren't used at all.

The Big Store (1941)

The Big Store is a 1941 American comedy film directed by Charles Reisner and starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo and Chico) that takes place in a large department store. Groucho appears as private detective Wolf J. Flywheel (a character name originating from the Marx-Perrin radio show Flywheel, Shyster, and Flywheel in the early 1930s).

The Big Store film was intended to be the Marxes' farewell as a team and had the working titles Bargain Basement, Step This Way and Gin Rummy. It was released by M-G-M on 20 June 1941. The basic idea of the film and the characters of Groucho (Flywheel) and Chico (Ravelli) derived from an episode of the Flywheel, Shyster and Flywheel radio show. Nat Perrin was a writer on the series and also made the original treatment of this film. Another old routine which was resurrected is Chico's and Harpo's piano switch from Home Again.

The trailer for this film is also worth mentioning. It starts with an executive, played by Henry O'Neill, sitting at his desk when he interrupts his duties to address the audience. He speaks about legendary French actress Sarah Bernhardt and her many lucrative "farewell" appearances. O'Neill than goes on to make a "most important announcement", .i.e. that the Marx Brothers are retiring from the silver screen.

Groucho (loping in from the left): That's right, folks! We're on our way!

Chico (popping up from behind the desk): That's right, folks, but where do we go from here?

Harpo climbs out from beneath the desk, waving and honking his horn.

Groucho And so...
...to all of you...
...a fond farewell!

Distracted by the sound of voices, they all head for the window. Outside is a vast crowd crying: No!

Groucho We...we didn't know you cared.
But since you do...
...we present to you...
...songs and scenes from our FIRST farewell picture...
...The Big Store!

Chico...where everything is a good buy...

Groucho Goodbye!

Even if the Sarah Bernhardt-anecdote is excised in most copies - thus weakening the point of the "first farewell picture"-gag - I find the trailer interesting as it forms a kind of cinematic Epilogue, neatly matching Theatrical Agency, the natural Prologue. The visual settings are similar and show the Marxes visiting an office and even if The Big Store-trailer is much shorter and much less elaborate than Theatrical Agency, Groucho seems to deliver his lines in a rhyming fashion reminiscent of the older piece. There's also a kind of strange balance where two pictures (The Cocoanuts and Animal Crackers) are preceding Theatrical Agency (the trailer of Monkey Business) and then - likewise - two pictures (A Night In Casablanca and Love Happy) following The Big Store which indeed became only their FIRST farewell picture.

A Night In Casablanca (1946)

A Night In Casablanca is a 1946 American comedy film directed by Archie Mayo and starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo, and Chico). The screenplay was written by Joseph Fields and Roland Kibbee. It was an independent production released by United Artists. The cast also features actress and singer Lisette Verea. The villain is portrayed by Sig Ruman, who had roles in the earlier Marx Brothers films A Night at the Opera (1935) and A Day at the Races (1937).

This film started life as Adventure In Casablanca and was preceded by a short tour principally in Army camps along the Pacific coast in August 1945 to get routines in shape and to memorize the material. Five comedy sketches were performed including a tailor-undressing bit followed by a burlesque duel skit, a dining scene, a Harpo-Chico pantomime and the packing-unpacking routine.

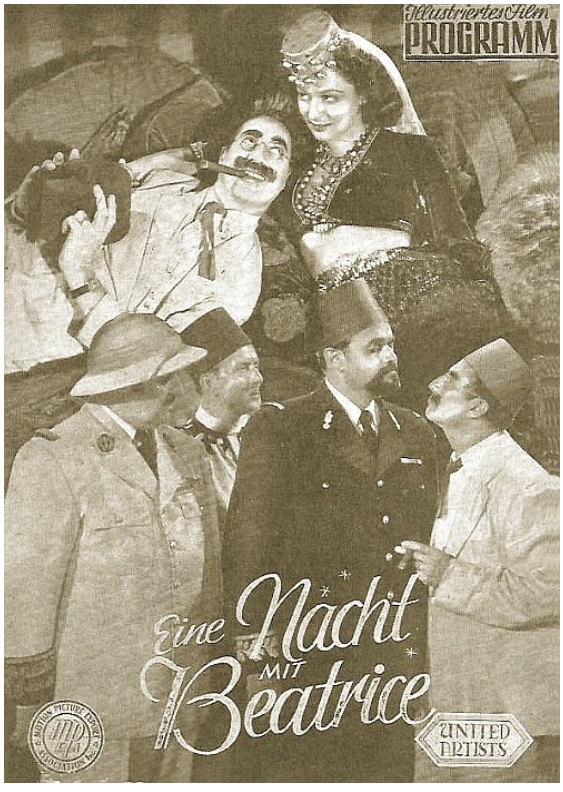
Filming started on 3 October and was finished in early December. The first version of the film ran for two hours. At the first proper preview in early January 1946, the film ran 113 minutes but was received unenthusiastically

by audience and Marxes alike. Desperate cutting before the release on 10 May 1946 reduced the film to 85 minutes. Most of the cuts are visible in the finished film as quick fade outs.

Presented here are two scenes which appeared early in the film. They've been reconstructed thanks to an excerpt from Movie script, 3rd Partial Revision: September 5, 1945 in Simon Louvish' book Monkey Business and D.L. Ames' A Night In Casablanca - The Book of the Film, a novelization of the film published in England in 1946.

This scene probably appeared about 10 minutes into the film after Governor Galoux and Captain Brizzard decided to send a telegram to the manager of the Desert View Hotel, offering him the post of manager of Hotel Casablanca.

Exterior desert, day. Only sand and sky are visible. Camera slowly pans to a hand-painted sign sticking in the sand, reading: 'FREE PARKING. This is the Desert View Hotel - out of the High Tent District'. Inside, another sign reads: 'Please close your tent flap before leaving'. Close shot - office. Groucho is revealed reclining on the mattress. He wears an ill-fitting white linen suite topped off by a red fez. Near him rests an elaborate oriental water-cooled pipe on which he is drawing, through a long corded tube. The pipe is rigged so that there is a cigar in the far attachment. A giant Arab emerges from the tent marked "2".



Groucho Ah! Mr Shrak Abdullah! [book: "Ah! Mr Shrak Siad"] Checking out, eh?

(Behind Mr Shrak a veiled, slim Arab girl emerges from the tent. Groucho bows)

And Mrs Shrak Abdullah!

(A second Arab girl appears, blushing)

And Mrs Shrak Abdullah!

(A third follows)

And Mrs Shrak Abdullah!

(This continues for a considerable number of Mrs Shrak Abdullahs, Groucho counting them on his fingers as they emerge)

Bungalow number 2, the bridal suite... [book: Let's see, Tent no.2, the bridal suite] Shrak Abdullah and twenty-eight wives for twenty-seven days

Mr Shrak No.

Groucho (corrrecting himself)...twenty-seven wives for twenty-eight days...

Mr Shrak Yes.

Groucho I'd have charge you for an extra wife if you weren't on your toes - and it takes quite a man to be on his toes with twenty-seven wives. I'd be on my heels. [That last phrase appears in the book as well but is crossed out on the script and replaced with: A guy's got to be charged up to have twenty-eight wives. That'll be a hundred and forty francs.]

(Mr Shrak pays and stalks off, followed by his long retinue of wives)

I don't envy him. Remember, every one of those wives has a mother!

(Groucho then finds a spare wife left sobbing in the bridal tent. He flings himself on the cushions beside her and consoles her)

Fine husband. He checks out of here and forgets you. Don't cry. I wouldn't worry about him. Men are ten cents a dozen...I wish women were.

Girl He'll come back for me.

Groucho Well, he'd better hurry. Remember, the management is not responsible for wives left over thirty days. (He adds passionately:) Don't be a fool, come away with me.

Girl I'll never leave here. I'm a part of Africa, and Africa is a part of me.

Groucho Well, at least I'm seeing the best part of Africa.

(Suddenly Mr Shrak is standing in the door of the tent)

What these tents need is a fire-escape.

(Groucho toys nervously with an hour-glass beside the couch, observes the running sand with sudden horror and slithers past Mr Shrak without pausing for further chit-chat)

Gad! Look at the time! A quarter to eleven!

(At the Office a honeymoon couple - i.e. a couple of blushing brides, one handsome young Arab groom and a camel who probably wasn't one of the party - are waiting to book accommodation)

Honeymoon, eh? You can have No. 2. It's still warm. As a matter of fact it got too hot for me. It's a lovely tent, with a fine view of the ocean.

Arab groom I see no ocean.

Groucho We're working on that. So far all we've got is the beach.

(Groucho indicates the Sahara Desert and the trio move off to the bridal tent)

What a lucky guy! Two wives. Any time he's in the mood he can play three-handed rummy.

(Groucho then receives the telegram from the Governor)

So they want me to take over the Casablanca Hotel! Why, I'll never leave this Hotel! I built it up from nothing. It's my old-age annuity - as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar. Nobody can take it away from me.

(A sound of wind appears, followed by a sudden desert storm. The tornado sweeps everything away - archway, office, tents. Like the camel beside him, Groucho is buried up to his neck in desert sand. He raises his eyebrows)

I've thought the whole proposition over very carefully. I'll take the job.

Shortly after this, Groucho arrives in Casablanca and is greeted by Chico. After a short conversation about Chico's camel, the scene fades but here's the continuation:

Groucho What do you do with your camels? How do you rent them? By the hour?

Chico I just fill them up with water and they go for eight days.

Groucho What do you feed them?

Chico Peanuts - it's the healthiest food in the world.

Groucho How do you know?

Chico I was a monkey for three years.

Groucho (glancing at him doubtfully) It's been longer than that.
By the way, what are your rates?

Chico Twenty francs for a camel with two humps, and ten francs for a camel with one hump.

Groucho What do you charge for a camel with no humps?

Chico A camel with no humps is a horse. I gotta horse too, but the horse has a bump.

Groucho (eyeing the street below him wistfully) If I could get back down there I'd go that way.

Chico Don't worry about the price, Boss. Whatever you got - I take.

(They arrive at the hotel and is greeted by Harpo, who takes possession of Groucho's carpet-bag)

Groucho Be careful of that. Everything I own in the world is in that bag! (The bag flips open)

Chico Hey! That bag is empty.

Groucho That'll give you an idea what I own.

Chico (returning to business) That'll be one hundred francs, Boss.

Groucho But the meter says fifty francs.

Chico Yeh, but I told you. It's double for a camel with two humps.

(Groucho gives up and pays but behind his back Chico removes one detachable hump. Meanwhile, Harpo produces a whisk broom and begin violently to brush what remains of Groucho's threadbare suit)

Groucho Hey, get away from me. What's the idea? What do you do anyway?

(Harpo pulls out a red-hot iron from his trousers, wets his forefinger and touches the iron with a little phut)

Chico That's what he does, Boss. He's a valet.

Groucho But he was trying to undress me.

Chico That's his business. He dresses and undresses the Count. Rusty's got a very tough job - the Count's got a lot of clothes. He makes sixteen changes a day.

Groucho What's so wonderful about that? I did that when I was three months old.

The first Italian dub of this movie from 1950 is interesting since it replaced the music in the film with Italian tunes. Thus, the sheet music above was sold as music from "Una Notte a Casablanca con i fratelli Marx" and included the tunes Dice un proverbio by Morbelli & Frandy, Da quell'istante by Pinchi & Taccani, Con un sogno by Tettoni & Rossi plus Tu non sai by Poletto & Rossi.

To overdub not just the dialogue but also the music was once a common practice in Italy, and other examples of this is the tune Shine on Harvest Moon from Laurel & Hardy's film The Flying Deuces (1939), which was replaced by A Zonzo (like Dice un proverbio also written by Riccardo Morbelli) in the Italian version. As late as in 1963, the Italian version of Jean-Luc Godard's film Contempt (starring Brigitte Bardot) replaced George Delerue's musical score with a completely different score written by Piero Piccioni.

Love Happy (1949)

Love Happy is a 1949 American musical comedy film released by United Artists, directed by David Miller and starring the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Harpo and Chico) in their 13th and final feature film. The screenplay was written by Frank Tashlin and Mac Benoff, based on a story by Harpo.

The film, produced by former silent film star Mary Pickford, features Groucho Marx in a smaller role than usual, with a supporting cast including Ilona Massey,

Vera-Ellen, Marion Hutton, Raymond Burr, Paul Valentine, Eric Blore, and Bruce Gordon (in his film debut), as well as a cameo appearance by a relatively unknown Marilyn Monroe.

This picture began as an attempt to create a solo vehicle for Harpo. The original story, The Sidewalk (which later became Sidewalks of New York, Diamonds in the Sidewalk or Diamonds in the Pavement) was suggested by Harpo himself and written for him by Ben Hecht, assisted by gag writer Frank Tashlin. The movie, basically a study in pantomime, recalled the freewheeling pre-talkie days, and the word-of-mouth was so good that the project had attracted Leo McCarey as a potential director. But before any of these events could come to fruition, the bottom dropped out. Tashlin, Hecht and Harpo all blamed producer Lester Cowan, who had lied about the film's value to the studio. With the original script literally dashed to bits, Hecht removed his name from the picture which went under a series of working titles like Blondes Up, Blonde Heaven and Hearts and Diamonds - diamonds being so central to the plot - until it finally became Love Happy. Tashlin was paired with Mac Benoff to write a framing story and narration for Groucho who - along with Chico - agreed to appear with their brother who at this point desperate to salvage his dream project.

However, the order of events isn't as clear as has been suggested. As early as 20 June 1947 (filming commenced more than a year later), Groucho wrote to his daughter Miriam and mentioned a film Ben Hecht was writing for Harpo and Chico. A subsequent letter (of 25 September) already mentions Groucho's guest role as a narrator. His letter of 18 October 1947 speaks once more of the film, describing it as the story Hecht "wrote for Harpo, and finally Chico got in it, and then I suddenly found myself in it for a brief bit."

Additionally, with money running low and to raise funds to complete the movie, the producers came up with the idea of selling advertising space on the neon signs on the roof that was the setting for the ending of the film. Nowadays, product placement like this is very common but back then it wasn't. The overall end result, despite a positive review from The New York Times and other major critics, remained a disappointment to Harpo until his dying day. In what was at one time to be an experiment in pantomime, it is wise-cracking Groucho as low rent private eye Sam Grunion who fares best, particularly in a brief opening scene with Marilyn Monroe, whose appearance in the picture upgraded her to co-star billing during re-releases, some of them under the name Kleptomaniacs.

An interesting thing about this film is how it deals with female cleavages. Groucho claimed that the dress of Marilyn Monroe was so low-cut that he forgot the dialogue, which makes it hard to understand why the cleavage of Ilona Massey (Madame Egilichi) very obviously have been blacked out from extant prints of Love Happy. Steven R. Wright has written to me about this and it happens in the scene where Madame Egilichi is giving Harpo the "whammy" to get him to talk and tell her where the sardine can with the Romanov diamonds is. Close-ups of Ilona shows a big black dot on her chest, probably added already during production.

There obviously were a lot of editing and changes before Love Happy premiered on 12 October 1949. Some stills reveal these changes, like Harpo being present when Chico plays card with a dog, and Marilyn Monroe appearing on the rooftop set. Additionally, in the Italian trailer of Love Happy (or Una notte sui tetti, roughly A Night on the Roof), the scene where Groucho attempts to frisk Harpo and Ilona Massey takes place in Grouchos' office instead of on the roof as in the finished film. Maybe this is an indication that all of Grouchos scenes originally were to take place in his office and that some of them were re-shot when the product placement made the rooftop sequence important.

Additionally, the DVD-reissue of the film includes six minutes not found in previous versions. These include Groucho describing how he has tracked Madame Egilichi all over the world (showing a series of photos depicting him holding her in various sexy poses, concluding with a photo of her in a 1950's style bathing suit), an additional encounter between Chico and a drooling Leon Belasco who is offered a parade of beauties, as well as different music scoring for some scenes.

Steven R. Wright has studied the DVD in detail and here's his report on the differences. He admits that he has "always been kind of soft-headed, uh, -hearted towards this film and I may be the only one out there who enjoys it to the extent of becoming familiar enough with it to notice all these differences".

And this is what he noticed:

Strange, morse-code dihs and dahs around Groucho's opening narration

A freeze-frame of Mike Johnson's dance, followed by Groucho saying "is there a band-aid in the house?"

Groucho's introduction of Chico as a former organ grinder for 20 years whose monkey "one day went on strike...he wanted shorter hours and longer bananas".

Harpo giving the man wearing the head of the bull costume a string of frankfurters who snorts them in thru a nostril, and then offering the loaded sardine can to the man in the rear of the bull and when the actor haughtily refuses it, Harpo gives him a ham and pointedly indicates you are what you eat. The thespian who later suggests they open "without scenery, costumes or salary" was the same guy who was the back-end of the bull.

An added sentence to the Bunny Dolan introduction

As for Steven's "contribution to the World of Marxology" (see above), the cleavage shadow is still there, but noticeably lighter

Groucho is narrating the scene with Chico and the parading beauties "keeping Lyons happy" (above), concluding that "Lyons was no dope...he selected the blonde on the end."

Before the Sadie Thompson scene, Mike Johnson telling the marines to "look hungry."

Additional lines concerning Harpo's torture; "give him everything!" Groucho: "And when she says everything, she means everything!". There's a few extra seconds of Harpo smoking rope while Raymond Burr hardly can keep a straight face. Also an added scene with Burr torturing Harpo in a washing machine ("with this machine you can wash your underwear without taking it off").

A couple of extra lines when Harpo shoots the gun pointed at his own head ("He hasn't the nerve; he won't shoot").

Extra lines by Mike Johnson claiming that Mr. Yorkman has chosen to remain "invisible" along with his "bank roll."

Illona Massey has few extra lines concerning her desire to back the show.

When going to Maggie's dressing room, Harpo brushes his hair, and turns his mirror around twice to look at the back of his head. In the earlier print this was just once.

Additional dialogue between Groucho and Ivan concerning the razor

Scene in which Throckmorton shows Illona Massey the x-rays of the cat he thought swallowed the diamonds.

When Harpo gets to the rooftop, a "GE Lamps" sign is prominent in the DVD. In the earlier prints this is superimposed by a "Curtiss/Baby Ruth" sign.

Looks like a few additional motions on the Mobil Pegasus on the roof

On the DVD, Illona Massey's dress is seen thru in front of the GE Lamps sign; on the tape and TV prints it is the Curtiss/Baby Ruth sign. Steven R. Wright: "No idea why the change there, but the GE sign has prominent spikes, which can still be seen when the lights are off. So, it looks to me the Curtiss sign was placed there after the film was shot. The GE sign can be seen in the TV print; but in the DVD there is no evidence of the Curtiss sign at all."

Harpo staggering away in a ball of smoke and then getting sucked into a vent.

Harpo plays some steam pipes like a calliope "(tho' they sound more like bells)".

Groucho's additional "I hope they are not playing for money" when Chico loses his coat to the dog playing gin.

The closing credits have a blank background on DVD print, and are shot over the rehearsal on the TV print.

A couple of other notes from Steven; in the scene where they are shooting the apple off of Harpo's head, the additional dialogue and two shots increased the total to *seven* bullets in the gun. In Harpos cave in the park, they use highly speeded up dialogue for the bird's voice. Several attempts at slowing it down to see what it was using sound tools were fruitless; "It is too murky to make out any real words; pity, as sometimes what is underneath this kind of stuff can be fairly humourous and at times, obscene!"

A Day At The United Nations (1961)

A Day At The United Nations would be an unmade 15th Marx Brothers film.

While making 1960's The Apartment in New York City, Director Billy Wilder was staying near the United Nations. He witnessed the cold war hubbub surrounding the place and one day asked his collaborator I. A. L. Diamond, "Do you think it would be funny to do a picture with the Marx Brothers at the United Nations?"

Diamond took to the idea and off they were. Groucho also liked the idea and told Wilder to make a deal with the group's agent, their brother Gummo. Gummo felt the deal was doable, so Wilder and Diamond developed the idea into a 40-page treatment. Wilder's never-made movie with the Marx Brothers, A Day At The United Nations, was announced in November 1960;

"We want to make a satire on the conditions of the world today, a satire on the deterioration of diplomatic behavior, on brinksmanship, wild jokes about the H-bomb, that type of stuff. It's all so dramatic that a few jokes put over by the Marx Bros. should alleviate the tension. We might have the Marx Bros. mixing up all the flags with, say, Nasser coming in under the Star of David. Mad fun like that. We will keep the same Marx Bros. technique of playing against a very serious background. We'll try to keep it all - the dignity of the locale, the procedure, the enormity of the problem - with Groucho, Harpo, and Chico in the middle of it. It's fun and it involves the world as a whole. It will be understood universally, therefore it's worth a film. Making a film is like gambling with the chips getting more expensive every day. That way you can't afford too big a gamble. So we've got the UN and we've got the Marx Bros. Put them together, and - boom!".

Groucho was to be the leader of a mob that decides New York's police department is so tied up with UN delegate protection that it would be possible to rob Tiffany's unnoticed by the distracted officers. Chico was to be the "muscle" of the organization, Harpo its safecracker, shown in one scene to be unable to open even a can of sardines. Navigating the New York sewer system, they would steal four suitcases of diamonds from Tiffany's before attempting to escape on a tramp steamer bound for Brazil. There would, however, be an anti-Communist demonstration when they got to the pier, and

somehow the police were to mistake them for the UN's Latvian delegation. They would be given a police escort to the Latvian embassy, just when they would otherwise have been able to escape. The comic climax was to have been a scene wherein Harpo addressed the entire General Assembly without uttering a sound, utilizing his classic bag of tricks including horn honking and girl lunging while multiple foreign interpreters tried to translate…

But age and infirmity crept in. Harpo had a heart attack while rehearsing for a TV special and though his health improved they were unable to get insurance for the project. Shortly thereafter Chico died, so neither Wilder nor the moviegoing audience got to enjoy the Marx Brothers spending a day at the UN.